

FRIENDS

of the UPPER EAST SIDE
HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, founded in 1982, is an independent, not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place of the Upper East Side.

WINTER 2016

NEWS FROM FRIENDS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

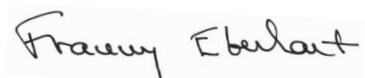
Donald Trump has been in the news a lot recently, and not just for his presidential campaign. On Fifth Avenue in Midtown, the management at Trump Tower has been required by the City to return to the lobby of its building a 22 foot long marble bench that over nine years ago had been replaced by two kiosks selling Trump paraphernalia. The bench had been a feature of the building's atrium, which was created as a special space, known as a POPS, or Privately Owned Public Space. These are areas set aside for public use and enjoyment in return for which a developer is allowed extra height to a building (20 stories in the case of Trump Tower). There are scores of them around the city. Most of them are familiar to us as outdoor plazas at the base of towers, which is where the phrase "plaza bonus" comes from, but some of them are interior lobbies that are publicly accessible. The correction of such a violation is a rare case of enforcing a POPS agreement, many of which are several decades old.

by the lawyer and urban planner Jerold Kayden in a volume titled *Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience*, published in partnership with the Department of City Planning and the Municipal Art Society. They are particularly valuable in our neighborhood, where FRIENDS' recent *Five Neighborhoods* study quantified how starved we are for open space and parks. (See detachable summary on last page.) In fact, from Fifth Avenue to the East River, 59th to 110th Streets, a paltry 1% of land is dedicated to parks and open space. The POPS vary considerably in quality of design, and maintenance, however. Two near where I live, for example, are conspicuous and lovely patches of green, with seasonal plantings maintained by the buildings. One of those is quite open with ample public seating, water features, and room for children to play; the other is quite closed and private. At the other end of the scale is a third, with parched planters, dead trees, and gates that are usually closed and locked. Surely that third site is in violation of its agreement with the City.

at 401 East 80th Street, at First Avenue. It is unusual in that it is not a *planted* park, but it meets so many of the other requirements of a fine neighborhood POPS, with ample space, room for both seating and play, joyful color (in all seasons!) and it is wonderfully maintained by management. We confess that we are partial to it because the sculpture is by the Tony Rosenthal, husband of FRIENDS' founder Halina Rosenthal.

Which is your favorite neighborhood POPS? And which do you find the most disappointing? You can find a list of them all on our website. Send us an email and let us know! FRIENDS plans to celebrate the good ones, and work with delinquent owners to improve those with failing marks so that we may return these valuable resources to the enjoyment of all.

Sincerely,



Franny Eberhart

On the Upper East Side we have a surprising 73 POPS, which were documented 15 years ago

This year FRIENDS is bestowing its first ever POPS-Star award to the *Steel Park*

LIVELY EVENING LEARNING THE HISTORY OF HOPS

On December 9th we hosted a sold out lecture on the history of breweries on the Upper East Side. Sixty beer enthusiasts joined us at Ryan's Daughter to uncover the histories of the Doelger, Schaefer, Ehret's, and Ruppert Breweries with the guidance of architectural historian Francis

plant constructed on East 55th Street between First Avenue and Avenue A. Clever marketing advertised their brews as the "pure temperance drink" which would impart "health, strength, and vitality" in every bottle and helped Doelger to stay afloat during Prohibition.

they capitalized on the production of German-style lager beer. Each housed their breweries on adjacent lots covering the full avenue from Second to Third on East 90th to East 94th Street. Bert Ringler & Co. Brewery also occupied part of the site for a portion of the early 20th century. The breweries not only offered



Francis Morrone captivated the crowd. Credit Gabriella Gallus.



Morrone and tastings provided by Coney Island Brewing. Mr. Morrone led us on a winding tour through history as he untangled the stories of four breweries. F. and M. Schaefer Brewing Company was founded in 1842 by Prussian immigrant brothers Frederick and Maximillian, who introduced German lager style beer to the United States. For many years, the Schaefer brewery was located on Park (then Fourth) Avenue between 50th and 51st Streets, encompassing the site now home to St. Bart's! By the time of its closure in 1976, Schaefer was known as the longest operating brewery in New York City. Peter Doelger Brewing Company was founded by Bavarian immigrants and operated in a

Meanwhile, Yorkville was the epicenter of activity for two brewery complexes, where the smell of hops filled the air throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jacob Ruppert Brewery operated from 1867-1965, and George Ehret's Hell Gate Brewery, named for

employment to thousands of immigrants, but Ruppert's famous Knickerbocker tap room also provided a neighborhood gathering spot.

Jacob Ruppert, Jr. began as a barrel washer in his father's brewery and took over the

Ehret, once the nation's largest brewer whose company was valued at over \$40 million, had a great commute to work from his home on the northeast corner of Park Avenue and East 94th street.

a nearby dangerous passage of the East River, was located in Yorkville from 1866-1935. Both Ehret and Ruppert were the children of brewers and channeled their German roots as

business at age 29. Jake Jr. was an eccentric bachelor well known around Yorkville as

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CELEBRATING YORKVILLE IN 2016

We are delighted that our friends at the Historic Districts Council have selected Yorkville as one of their Six to Celebrate neighborhoods for 2016. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation and priority for HDC's advocacy and consultation over the year. With the imminent arrival of the Second Avenue subway, Yorkville is on the brink of change, and the need to raise awareness about the special character of this neighborhood and advocate for its preservation has never been greater.

Together with HDC, FRIENDS will advocate for landmark designation of significant sites throughout the neighborhood. Thanks to research largely compiled by two Columbia University studio projects in Yorkville, FRIENDS has amassed a trove of history and documentation about many sites related to the area's immigrant heritage, so that we may lead the charge for Landmarks Preservation Commission attention to significant cultural institutions, religious buildings, and more. Also stay tuned for more information about a symposium celebrating Yorkville's immigrant heritage, featuring cuisine from some of the neighborhood's storied immigrant establishments, to take place on Saturday, April 30th at Bohemian National Hall! ♦

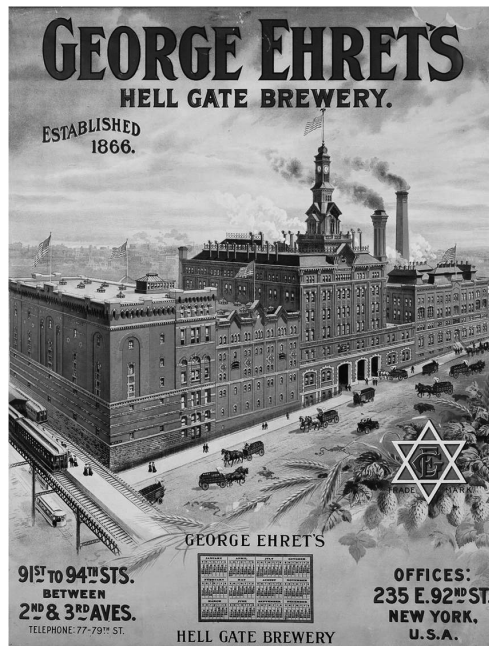
HISTORY OF HOPS

continued from page 2.

"The Colonel" thanks to his time in the Seventh Regiment of the National Guard. He kept a collection of exotic monkeys and birds at his country house, collected Chinese porcelain, and loved baseball. The latter led him to purchase the New York Yankees in 1915 and acquire Babe Ruth in 1919. Ruppert built the first Yankee Stadium, and the team won nine pennants and seven world championships before his death in 1939.

Ehret, once the nation's largest brewer whose company was valued at over \$40 million, had a great commute to work from his home on the northeast corner of Park Avenue and East 94th Street. Ehret passed away in 1927; in 1935, his estate moved the brewery's operation to Brooklyn and sold the rest of the land to Ruppert Jr. Ruppert weathered the Prohibition era by selling "near beer," or beer with 0.5% alcohol. It was a sad day for

the Yorkville community when the brewery closed its doors in 1965. Soon after, the



An advertisement depicted Ehret's fanciful brewery buildings. Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.

mammoth buildings were bulldozed to make way for an urban renewal project, including Ruppert Towers, which occupy the site today.

Christopher Gray notes that Ehret's buildings had "elements of castle, firehouse, factory and car barn...with a huge clock tower at the top," while Ruppert's buildings were more "subdued."

It was truly fascinating to examine the history of the Upper East Side through the lens of its breweries. Many thanks to Ryan's Daughter, Francis Morrone, and Coney Island Brewing for such a wonderful evening. ♦

SAVE THE DATE

**RHINELANDERS IN YORKVILLE:
A WALKING TOUR WITH
FRANNY EBERHART**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18TH

The Wooden House that Could



412 East 85th Street

Supporters of wooden houses citywide showed up at the Landmarks Preservation Commission's special hearing on November 12, 2015 to speak in favor of the designation of 412 East 85th Street as an individual landmark. The house was built circa 1860 and is a rare example of a wooden clapboard building in Yorkville, a remnant from the area's agrarian past. It is one of only six wood frame houses on the Upper East Side, and the only one which remains unprotected. Its owners have been careful stewards of the building, restoring it to its 1916 appearance based on the earliest and most com-

plete existing photographs. By all accounts, 412 East 85th Street is already an unofficial neighborhood landmark, and a beloved fixture of FRIENDS' educational walking tours. Vocal support by its owners, in addition to Council Member Ben Kallos, the Historic Districts Council, Municipal Art Society, New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Victorian Society in America, Carnegie Hill Neighbors, Community Board 8, and FRIENDS will help to ensure a positive outcome for the building.

in favor of a more judicious plan. Throughout the winter, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer met with a variety of stakeholders, including FRIENDS, to propose a transparent designation process to handle these properties. In June 2015, the LPC announced a special Backlog Initiative to address with each of these items. Throughout the period of public review this fall, four special public hearings were held to address all 95 items. 412 East 85th Street was the only Upper East

The house was built circa 1860 and is a rare example of a wooden clapboard building in Yorkville, a remnant from the area's agrarian past.

In November 2014, the Landmarks Preservation Commission announced a plan to remove nearly 100 properties from consideration for designation. These items had been "calendared" for public hearings, but had not yet been approved or denied as landmarks by the Commission. In response to public outcry, the LPC agreed to postpone the de-calendaring

Side property under consideration, and the LPC selected it for designation at its February 23rd public meeting. In total, 30 of the 95 items on the backlog were similarly prioritized. We can't wait to announce our 129th individual landmark after the designation hearing to take place later this year - keep an eye out for further updates in your e-mail inbox! ♦

TWELFTH ANNUAL AMBASSADOR TO THE UPPER EAST SIDE AWARD DINNER

More than 200 members of New York City's philanthropic, preservation and civic communities gathered on Tuesday, September 29th at the Metropolitan Club at 1 East 60th Street. This year, Honorary Chairs Philip and Alexandra Howard and FRIENDS honored renowned pianist and bandleader Peter Duchin at the *Twelfth Annual Ambassador to the Upper East Side Award Dinner*. Through his leadership roles with numerous cultural organizations including the New York State Council on the Arts, Glimmerglass Opera, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, among others, and as America's preeminent dance-band leader, Mr. Duchin truly embodies the spirit of the Upper East Side, both festive and serious.

The gala was a huge success with more guests than ever present to celebrate and support FRIENDS' mission to safeguard the character of the neighborhood and advocate for sound preservation policy in New York City. The evening featured the premiere of a short film celebrating the Upper East Side's diversity from its little-known immigrant roots to its famed "Gold Coast," highlighting the challenges it will face going forward. ♦



Our honoree, Peter Duchin.



Walter B. Melvin, FRIENDS President Franny Eberhart, and Board Member Dan Strickler.



Guests enjoyed cocktails at the Metropolitan Club.

FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR YOUNG FRIENDS



Students at PS 50 sketching in East Harlem during their Landmarks & Preservation walking tour.

2015 was a banner year for Young FRIENDS. We reached a record number of students in schools, camps, and after school programs. Over 1,700 children were exposed to architecture in their communities and city while participating in the Building Fun, Yorkville Immigration, or Landmarks & Preservation programs. Teachers and chaperones taking part also learned something along the way. We often hear comments on how they never really noticed their neighborhood in quite this way...

This year, we met new friends at Hewitt, PS 87, Saint Stephen of Hungary, Hunter College Elementary School, PS 50, East Harlem School, Our Lady Queen of Angels, Child School, and the Summer Illustration Art Academy at the Society of Illustrators. We look forward to more adventures in 2016.

As we marked the 50th anniversary of the Landmarks Law in New York City in 2015, it is important to celebrate the role Young FRIENDS has in exposing the city's youth to the unique personality and vitality of the brownstones, shops, churches, temples, schools, and other buildings in their midst. ♦

THE UPPER EAST SIDE: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE OF FIVE NEIGHBORHOODS

In October 2015 FRIENDS released “The Upper East Side: A Framework for the Future of Five Neighborhoods,” a planning and zoning study that identifies specific development risks threatening community integrity in the neighborhoods of Lenox Hill, Yorkville, East Harlem, Carnegie Hill, and the Upper East Side in the wake of inappropriately scaled, poorly sited, and non-contextual high density development on the horizon as the Second Avenue Subway’s opening draws near.

FRIENDS supports smart growth in New York

City, including the careful placement of higher-density development at transit hubs and along broad north-south avenues and major east-west streets. However, it is also clear that we need thoughtfully prescribed zoning regulations controlling use, bulk placement, and height, to mitigate the impact of development on light, air, open spaces, historic resources, and local character of the Upper East Side. The report, prepared with the assistance of BFJ Planning, examines the parts of the Upper East Side that are most vulnerable to these forces, particularly the eastern avenue corridors and low-rise mid-

block areas. The Study Area comprises the entire land area from East 59th to East 110th Streets, from Central Park to the East River. The report identifies the **essential elements that provide a sense of place** and the **factors in current zoning that support individual character** found in these neighborhoods. It also examines the **specific development risks that threaten community integrity** and **identifies strategies** that would work best to balance continued growth with preservation for the future quality of the urban environment.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The Upper East Side comprises distinct neighborhoods. Apart from the “Gold Coast” neighborhoods bordering Central Park are the modest neighborhoods east of Park Avenue which have always been and remain a diverse, family-oriented, and affordable area. With their attractive five-story walk-ups situated along tree-lined streets with local “mom and pop” shops nestled below, the eastern neighborhoods of Yorkville and Lenox Hill are two of Manhattan’s most walkable and comfortable neighborhoods.

Rich in immigrant history and human-scaled fabric, these neighborhoods have historically been diverse, modestly scaled, and may be among the last relatively affordable places to live in Manhattan today. However, residents clamor for seats in public schools, tables at public libraries, and standing room on the cross-town bus. This is a thriving, vibrant area that is already desperate for expanded or improved community services. Below are several key planning issues in these neighborhoods.

LIVABILITY

Without historic district designation, the eastern portions of the Study Area rely on hard-won contextual zoning to maintain the human-scaled character on the midblocks, while higher-density development is shifted to the wider streets and avenues. This balance is key to the livability of the area.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

38% of parcels on the Upper East Side contain affordable units, but they must be preserved for this area to remain affordable and livable for all residents. Between 2007 and 2014, CB8 saw a net loss of 26% of affordable units compared to a loss of 6% citywide. During that period, nearly 1,600 buildings lost rent-stabilized apartments. Of those, 70% were east of Third Avenue, illustrating the alarming loss of affordability in our area.

DIVERSITY

These neighborhoods are characterized by income diversity and a dense population aged 62 and older. Unmitigated change has the potential to displace these vulnerable populations.

SCHOOLS

Public schools in these communities are at or over capacity, and cannot accommodate additional growth. The Department of Education has no additional elementary schools in its capital plan for the Upper East Side. Any population increase will further burden this strained system.

OPEN SPACE

Less than 1% of land area on the Upper East Side is comprised of park and open space, compared to 14% citywide. This amounts to less than 1 acre of parkland per 1,000 people in the Study Area. Many of the open spaces are poorly maintained or underutilized Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS).

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HISTORIC DISTRICTS

966 Lexington Ave., #3E | New York, NY 10021
www.friends-ues.org | 212.535.2526

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to plan for growth, control the consumption of public services by increased density, and ensure that the Upper East Side remains home to people from a diversity of income levels, we make these 12 recommendations:

1. Preserve and Protect Contextual Zoning.

Low-scale building stock, especially in the mid-blocks of Yorkville, creates a pedestrian environment. These “valleys” are mixed in with the “hills” of the taller avenues.

2. Maintain Existing Densities.

Current zoning permits some redevelopment along avenues and wide streets. Therefore we recommend no changes to overall density on the Upper East Side.

3. Create New C1-9X Contextual Zoning for Avenues.

Avenues in the Study Area currently zoned R10 (or equivalent C1-9) should be rezoned to require that new tower construction is limited by height and required to be built on a contextual base which blends in with existing low-scale structures, like the tenements which dominate the avenues.

4. Restrict the Height of Buildings to 210 Feet.

Avenues in the Study Area should require a height limit of 210 feet for new construction.

5. Limit Zoning Lot Mergers.

To decrease possibility for supertalls to be constructed on the Upper East Side, we recommend a pilot restriction on the size of zoning lot mergers. We also recommend greater transparency and public information when zoning lot mergers occur.

6. Protect Affordable Housing.

There is a long history of affordable housing (rent-regulated, subsidized, and public housing) on the Upper East Side. This must be maintained to ensure livability for a broad range of households in the future. New development should replace in-kind any units lost due to redevelopment, and all units should be permanently affordable. We support recent anti-harassment legislation protecting tenants. We also recommend legislation to make a public inventory of rent-regulated units in order to facilitate their protection and replacement in case of redevelopment.

7. Investigate Financial Opportunities for Property Owners.

We support relief for private owners of rent-regulated housing to assist in operation and maintenance, such as tax credits, revolving loans, or grants to ensure the safety and efficiency of their buildings and to reduce redevelopment. We recommend a study examining operation and maintenance costs incurred by owners of buildings with rent-regulated units in the Study Area.

8. Revisit “Zoning for Quality and Affordability.”

As proposed, the City’s plan does not guarantee increased quality or affordability of new construction, only that it will be taller and denser. We recommend a more fine-grained neighborhood approach rather than a one-size-fits-all policy.

9. Ensure Small Businesses Thrive.

Small businesses are the best way to ensure a diversity of services and help preserve neighborhood vitality and sense of place, especially in the eastern portions of the Study Area. We support the Manhattan Borough President’s initiatives to prevent expiration of ground-floor retail use and reform commercial rent tax. We also recommend regulations which promote active and varied retail frontages, as developed by the Department of City Planning on the Upper West Side.

10. Implement Open Space and Infrastructure Improvements.

Much of the minimal open space in the Study Area is in the form of poorly maintained and underutilized Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), sometimes known as bonus plazas. We recommend a study of existing POPS, and a new program to incentivize upgrade, enforce regulation, and review redesign. Active open space such as the East River Esplanade should be prioritized over passive open space.

11. Require Community-Based Planning around Station Areas.

The arrival of the Second Avenue Subway will increase market demand around the new stations. We recommend the Department of City Planning launch a community-based planning process around the station areas to ensure that new development contributes positively to the neighborhood and does not proceed in a piecemeal fashion. In addition to height and density, community plans could address light and air, public realm improvements, community school and traffic impacts, and good urban design principles for these areas.

12. Create 197-a Plan(s) for the Upper East Side Study Area.

In considering a future framework for the Upper East Side Study Area, we recommend FRIENDS work with other community groups to encourage Community Boards 8 and 11 to create or update 197-a Plans for their respective jurisdictions. This would allow the Upper East Side communities to engage in a participatory planning process and reach consensus on a wide variety of issues related to the objective of preserving the best of the Upper East Side neighborhoods while accommodating growth in the long term.

OUR MISSION

FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, founded in 1982, is an independent, not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability, and sense of place of the Upper East Side. In addition to monitoring the Upper East Side's seven historic districts and 128 individual landmarks, FRIENDS has also been a leader in successful efforts to improve the zoning laws governing the area's avenues and residential side streets. Through effective advocacy and successful educational programs, FRIENDS acts as a steward safeguarding the future of all Upper East Side historic districts and the designated and contributing buildings that make those districts special.

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FRIENDS of the Upper East Side Historic Districts
966 Lexington Avenue, #3E New York, NY 10021
t. 212-535-2526 f. 212-535-2155
www.friends-ues.org



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